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## MARTINS KILL THE CATERPILLARS.

We know that the members of the Swallow family are insect eaters and must therefore be entirely beneficial to agricultural interests, but we really attach scanty importance to what they actually do in the way of keeping down the insect pests until the facts are forced upon us by some concrete instance. Many a farmer or gardner or fruit grower has seriously questioned whether the good they do after all compensates for the litter which they are likely to leave about the out-buildings. When new, the nests are objects of beauty, but in time they will crumble away, scattering dirt and mud about in just the wrong places. Too often the person benefitted fails to perceive the benefit because he has never known the time when the swallows or martins were not a part of the furnishing of his premises, or he has entirely forgotten the changed conditions since the birds came to live with him. A concrete case of the real utility of the Purple Martin comes to me in a clipping from the *Daily Kennebec Journal*, under the caption of this article. It is so good that I quote it entire with the earnest plea that all skeptics as well as all others who have not already provided for the entertainment of the Martins should do so without further delay.

*Editors Kennebec Journal :*

If you will allow me a little space in your agricultural columns I will tell you what little I know to be a fact in regard to keeping caterpillars and other worms and grubs from our apple trees.

I have a small orchard near my house and my neighbors have the same adjoining mine. Through all the caterpillar years for fifteen years past these orchards have had but a very few caterpillar nests in them. Last year there were but three nests in my orchard, while I had trees about three-fourths of a mile away that were completely covered with them and others were the same. Now the remedy.

Eighteen years ago I had a large martin house built and set it in the middle of my little orchard on a crotch pole about fifteen feet high. The house was large enough for fourteen pairs of martins. The second year every room was taken up by them and has been every year since.

These birds raise from four to six young to a nest. They arrive here from the eighteenth to the twenty-first of April, sometimes the snow would still be two feet deep around the martin house pole. But they come just the same and never vary from that time. They hatch their young about the middle of June and begin to fly about the middle of

July. So you see in July and part of August I have from seventy to eighty-five birds flying around my trees and my neighbors'. These birds get all their living on the wing, never going to the ground except to get material to build their nests. Their whole living is on millers and flies, and they are great feeders. They are on the wing nearly all the time when it does not rain, and they are especially busy just before sunset, when the caterpillar moths begin their work. These moths or millers lay their eggs the last of July or August, just the time when these birds are in best working condition and but very few winged insects escape them. This is the cause of my not having any caterpillars in my orchard, so I claim.

These birds invariably leave for parts unknown from the 18th to the 22nd of August. They are great singers in their way, and commence their songs about half past three in the morning. Perhaps some would not like that at first as it would disturb their morning repose; then put them further away in your orchard.

Now I believe if every one that had an orchard would put up from one to five martin houses among their trees they would rid them of caterpillars and many other insects that injure our apple trees. These houses do not want to be gaudy but plain, paint lead color if painted at all, high colors drive them away for a few years.

If any one decides to try this they must set their poles (which should be cedar), before the ground freezes and the house must be up before the 20th of April. Some of my neighbors are going to try it next spring, and I wish many others would. Why not have the air full of these beautiful birds about our home? Give them a home and they will come.

J. L. O.

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## GENERAL NOTES.

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A TALENTED CATBIRD.—While walking along a hot, dusty road in the Great Chester Valley about 2 P. M. on May 22nd, the subdued call of the cock Quail issued from a shady grove extending to the roadside near New Centerville. Peering over the rail fence, I was at first unable to locate the sound, but presently espied the author—a Catbird close at hand. Perched between and parallel with the rails, he called *Bob-bob-white, bob-white-bob*, in a soft, dreamy whistle, seemingly rehearsing a love song or singing for his own edification, as the female was not present. After a few trials, he retired within the wood to scratch about